

June 30, 2005: Congressman Everett Statement to BRAC Regional Hearing

Congressman Terry Everett Statement to Military Base Realignment and Closure Commission Regional Hearing
Statement for the Record

2005 BRAC Commission Hearing

Atlanta, Georgia

June 30, 2005

Presented By: Congressman Terry Everett (AL-02)
Representing Maxwell-Gunter AFB & Fort Rucker

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Commission:

It is my honor to appear before you today in support of the military installations residing in the Second District of Alabama. I would like to begin by thanking you and your staff for undertaking this most crucial of tasks to ensure that our military is properly structured to fight the ongoing war on terror. I represent two major installations in my congressional district, Fort Rucker in the Wiregrass and Maxwell-Gunter AFB in Montgomery. I am also proud to represent the 908th AF Reserve wing and the 187th Air National Guard fighter wing located at Dannelly Field. All were impacted by the Department of Defense's BRAC recommendations. Critical elements in fighting this war are missions performed by the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group (OSSG) at Maxwell-Gunter AFB and Fort Rucker, located in my congressional district.

Maxwell-Gunter AFB -- OSSG

I am very disappointed in the Pentagon's recommendation to realign the OSSG to Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts. Since 1993, over \$275 million in military construction has been authorized to modernize Maxwell-Gunter including state-of-the-art dorms, educational facilities and the 1,500-foot runway expansion. In addition, \$12.8 million was appropriated for the Integrated Operation Support Facility to support the mission of the OSSG at Gunter. Furthermore, I recently met with Lt. Gen. Charles Johnson, Commander of the Air Force Electronic Systems Command, about leadership and funding issues that I had concerning the OSSG. Shortly thereafter, Greg Garcia was named as the new director of the OSSG, while other military leadership positions that have been vacant due to retirements are beginning to be filled.

Despite my efforts, the Pentagon has made an unwise decision and called for the realignment of 1,251 civilian and military jobs from Maxwell-Gunter AFB to Hanscom AFB, which is the parent organization of the OSSG. The OSSG has provided world-class combat operational support to Air Force bases and DoD agencies around the world from Montgomery for more than 30 years. It does not need to be moved in order to continue to perform this critical national security mission. Most significantly, the transfer of the OSSG to Hanscom AFB would necessitate a reproduction of infrastructure, personnel, and contractor base, and therefore could potentially harm the warfighter during this transition because of OSSG's combat support mission. Additionally, a move to a significantly higher cost area, like Massachusetts, is expected to bring a price tag of over \$254 million with any potential payback not expected for another eight years.

The OSSG is the only organization with experience fielding systems across the entire Air Force and DoD. Moreover, Gunter is home to one of four major Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) nodes which provide the backbone on which Air Force Systems run -- a synergy that does not exist at Hanscom AFB. The DISA presence, along with the OSSG, enables testing of enterprise-wide combat support software applications in an operational environment. With its extensive background, experience, and expertise, this organization is truly a one of a kind national resource and belongs in Montgomery.

Fort Rucker - Aviation Logistics School

On the other hand, I was very pleased that the Department of Defense (DoD) recognized the significance of the Army Aviation Center at Fort Rucker by realigning the Aviation Logistics School with the aviation pilot training. This move consolidates Army Aviation training and doctrine development at Fort Rucker. I could not agree with DoD's belief that consolidating aviation logistics training with the Aviation Center and School will foster consistency, standardization, and

training proficiency. As the premier rotary wing aviation training center in the United States, this move finally completes the formation of the Army's decision to create an aviation branch in 1983. The benefits of being able to train the entire flight crew, from the maintainers to the pilots, is quite significant. There is no reason why a flight crew who must go to war as a team should not train as a team.

In addition to the increase in military value, the relocation of the Aviation Logistics School to Fort Rucker makes economic sense. This recommendation will not only allow the Army to reduce the total number of Military Occupational Skills (MOS) training locations, which shrinks the TRADOC footprint, but also eliminates excess capacity at institutional training locations, thereby providing the same or better level of service at a reduced cost. These reduced costs are achieved due to the fact that the proposed arrangement requires fewer sustainment dollars and a smaller Army recapitalization program. The annual recurring savings of almost \$43 million will go a long way in supporting the Army's transformation efforts. For these reasons, I strongly urge the Commission to adopt this recommendation.

Fort Rucker - Aviation Technical Test Center (ATTC)

While I am very pleased that DoD has recommended moving an important mission to Fort Rucker, I am very concerned about its proposal to realign the Aviation Technical Test Center (ATTC) to Redstone Arsenal. This issue is very close to me personally as I have been intimately involved with it for over 10 years. In the mid-90s, there was an effort made within the Pentagon to move the ATTC out of Fort Rucker. As is the case now, I was very troubled by this, and began to investigate in an effort to determine if this would be best for the Army, highlighted by a personal meeting with the then-Secretary of the Army, Togo West. This culminated when my amendment was included in the House version of Fiscal Year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act (HR 1530) which blocked the Army's proposal to relocate the ATTC until an outside independent study of the proposal could be completed. After an analysis of the move was completed, not only did the ATTC stay at Fort Rucker, but the Airworthiness Qualification Test Directorate was moved from Edwards AFB to Fort Rucker as well. I believe the arguments presented then still have substantial merit today.

At Fort Rucker, the ATTC is able to have their fleet of approximately 40 test aircraft maintained by the large maintenance and logistics operation on post that will be significantly bolstered by the relocation of the Aviation Logistics School from Fort Eustis, the group responsible for training our helicopter maintainers. A move to Redstone disregards these significant costs of keeping the test fleet flying. The vast pool of pilots and aircraft from the Aviation Center also facilitates the ATTC's ability to realize a greater return on the testing dollar invested.

Another problem with this recommendation revolves around airspace. As the home of Army Aviation, Fort Rucker is blessed with over 32,000 square miles of airspace to conduct its mission. This irreplaceable natural asset cannot be duplicated in Huntsville. A potential move also undermines the synergies that currently exist between the schoolhouse and the experimental pilots. Finally, with Fort Rucker being the Army proponent for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), it is crucial that the ATTC be able to leverage the expertise associated with this proponent to conduct its tests on UAVs. Fort Rucker also has Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certified UAV air space, which may not be able to be duplicated at Redstone.

Fort Rucker - Consolidation of Rotary Wing Pilot Training

Finally, I would like to bring to the Commission's attention another area of interest to me, the consolidation of rotary wing pilot training at Fort Rucker. Although DoD did not make this recommendation, I believe a thorough review of the facts will prompt the Commission to include this in its final list. Currently, both the Army and Air Force conduct their rotary wing pilot training at Fort Rucker, and has sufficient capability to support Navy initial rotary wing pilot training.

Numerous reviews conducted by DoD and the GAO dating back to 1974 have been made regarding the relocation of this Navy mission. In addition, when Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he testified before the House Armed Services Committee that he supported this consolidation at Fort Rucker. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of the reviews have called for the Navy to move their operation to Fort Rucker for a number of reasons. Past studies have indicated that tens of millions of dollars per year could be saved by going through with this consolidation. Unit costs would be reduced for both aircraft maintenance and logistics. Additionally, both the Army and the Navy use the same training helicopter which would allow for further savings by using the Army's existing instructor pilots. This consolidation will also advance a key component of DoD's way ahead, jointness.

Alabama Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Components

With the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have relied on both our active and reserve forces quite heavily. Over 50 percent of the National Guard's nearly 350,000 Army and 107,000 Air National Guard members had been activated for overseas warfighting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, or homeland missions, such as guarding active Air Force bases. These operations have resulted in a high demand for Guard members overall and especially for those trained with certain skills, such as security personnel and tanker pilots. These contributions are vital to the war on terrorism and homeland security.

Both the 908th AF Reserve Mobility Unit and the 187th Air National Guard Fighter Wing are prime examples of what these forces can bring to the fight. As two of the premier units within the Air Force, I was pleased to see that DoD recognized this as well in adding an additional three F-16s to the 187th and four C-130s to the 908th. The addition of the C-130s creates an optimally sized reserve component squadron. The move of the F-16s will align common versions of these Block 30 aircraft at Dannelly Field. Moreover, DoD has recommended that 60 firefighter positions move to Dannelly as well to better support this mission. I support these decisions and hope the Commission will include them in its final report to the President.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I appreciate the opportunity to share my views with you on the BRAC recommendations. I look forward to working with you and your staff in implementing the Department's recommendation to the move of the Aviation Logistics School to Fort Rucker, as well as the realignment of the F-16s and C-130s to Dannelly Field and Maxwell-Gunter AFB, respectively. Furthermore, I would be happy to provide you with further information in your review of the factors involved in the decision to move the Aviation Technical Test Center from Fort Rucker to Redstone Arsenal and the consolidation of rotary wing pilot training.